

United States Court of Appeals
FOR THE EIGHTH CIRCUIT

No. 02-3203

Prasith Long,

Petitioner,

v.

John Ashcroft,

Respondent.

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* Petition for Review of
* an Order of the Immigration
* and Naturalization Service.

* [UNPUBLISHED]

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Submitted: August 29, 2003
Filed: September 3, 2003

Before RILEY, HANSEN, and SMITH, Circuit Judges.

PER CURIAM.

Petitioner, a Lao citizen, seeks review of an order of the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) dismissing his appeal from an Immigration Judge's denial of his application for asylum and withholding of removal. He argues that the BIA erred in denying his application because the BIA "blurred" his statutory basis for asylum, inadequately addressed whether he suffered past persecution, and relied exclusively on the State Department's country report to distort the political situation in Laos. After careful review of the record, we deny the petition. See Navarajo-Barrios v. Ashcroft, 322 F.3d 561, 562 (8th Cir. 2003) (standard of review).

Even assuming petitioner established past persecution, his testimony, along with the State Department's country report, support the BIA's conclusion that he lacks a well-founded fear of future persecution. See Francois v. INS, 283 F.3d 926, 930-31 (8th Cir. 2002). He was not harassed during the nine years before he left Laos, his wife was not bothered after he left, and there is no indication that his two daughters who remain in Laos have been harmed. In addition, petitioner and his wife were issued passports and were permitted to leave the country, see id. at 932; Manivong v. Dist. Dir., U.S. Dep't of Justice, 164 F.3d 432, 433 (8th Cir. 1999), and the country report indicates that conditions in Laos have improved, exit visas and passports are generally easy to obtain, the government does not interfere with emigration, and former citizens who fled the regime have been welcomed back, see Perinpanathan v. INS, 310 F.3d 594, 599 n.1 (8th Cir. 2002).

Accordingly, we deny the petition.

A true copy.

Attest:

CLERK, U.S. COURT OF APPEALS, EIGHTH CIRCUIT.